

# What We Tell Ourselves

The chapter titled *What We Tell Ourselves* delves into the profound self-reflection that artists experience in their creative journeys. It examines how the stories artists tell themselves about their identity and their work often serve as distractions, masking the deeper truths of their creations. These narratives, while comforting, fail to capture the authentic essence of the art itself or the impact it has on the world, emphasizing that the true value lies in the work produced rather than the tales crafted around it.

The author challenges the notion of self-defining stories, arguing that they act as filters, narrowing our perception of reality and reducing the boundless potential of creativity. Each individual interprets life and art through their own unique lens, shaped by countless variables that no single narrative can encompass. With the vastness of information in the world, the human mind can only process a fraction, inevitably creating an incomplete and often distorted understanding of experiences, ideas, and the art that emerges from them.

This perspective highlights the inherent limitations of trying to simplify creative efforts or human experiences into universally relatable concepts. The stories we create about ourselves, while helpful for coherence, can become restrictive, confining the infinite possibilities of our identity and artistic potential. By clinging to these self-created tales, individuals risk reducing truth to something digestible yet far removed from the profound reality that exists beyond the limits of perception.

For artists, the chapter suggests a radical approach: the abandonment of these narratives in favor of a deeper trust in the curiosity and energy that fuels their creative impulses. Artistic creation is depicted as a dynamic convergence of the individual, the universe, and the disciplined yet enigmatic process of transforming an idea into reality. This process is not always linear or harmonious—it often involves

contradictions and tensions—but it reflects an underlying order, a cosmic rhythm that transcends the limits of any singular story.

The chapter argues that this tension is not a flaw but rather an integral part of the artistic journey. It is within these contradictions that new possibilities emerge, allowing the artist to explore uncharted realms and push the boundaries of expression. The act of creation becomes an encounter with the unknown, a dialogue between the artist and the vast, mysterious forces that shape existence. Through this dialogue, art takes on a life of its own, resonating with audiences in ways that cannot always be predicted or controlled.

To illustrate this, the author emphasizes the importance of trusting the creative process and embracing its uncertainties. The value of art lies not in the artist's explanation of their work but in its ability to evoke emotions, provoke thoughts, and inspire change. The narrative reminds artists that their role is not to define their art but to facilitate its emergence, allowing it to speak for itself and resonate authentically with those who encounter it.

Moreover, the chapter invites readers to reflect on their relationship with the stories they tell themselves about their own lives and contributions. It suggests that this principle extends beyond artists to anyone seeking meaning in their endeavors. By stepping away from self-imposed narratives, individuals can open themselves to greater possibilities, discovering truths that are too expansive for any single perspective to capture.

Ultimately, *What We Tell Ourselves* delivers a compelling message: the value of art, and indeed life, lies beyond the confines of any narrative. True creativity flourishes when we release the need for control and embrace the boundless potential of the unknown. By doing so, artists—and individuals more broadly—can create work that is not only deeply personal but also universally resonant, connecting with the infinite complexity of existence in ways no story ever could.

Through its reflective and thought-provoking tone, the chapter encourages artists to trust in the process and recognize that the true essence of their work resides not in the stories they construct but in the raw, unfiltered impact of their creations. In doing so, it celebrates the power of art as a bridge between the tangible and the transcendent, a testament to the limitless possibilities of the human spirit.